

Your Honor,

I would like you to know that over the past two years, I have been able to successfully begin the process of addressing several of my deep-seated mental health and social wellness deficiencies for the first time in my life. I have been diligent in therapy, in my reading, and my journaling. These past two years have given me a lot of insight into what led me to my criminal thinking and what I need to do to change.

I have put a great deal of effort into the sex offender treatment program that was made available to me at Tetzlaff and Myhre. By participating in weekly group treatment sessions and bi-weekly individual therapy appointments, I have finally begun to address some of important issues such as my low self-esteem and body image. I have also begun to the long and emotional journey of towards the acceptance that being a gay man does not make me any less of a human being. I still have a great deal of trauma to work through, but I am hopeful that my momentum from the past two years of work will aid in my transformative journey ahead.

The truth is that no matter how hard I worked to appear “normal” around others, I spent the majority of my time in Sun Prairie feeling isolated, depressed, and ashamed. I had one or two genuine “long distance” friends but did not have a single person in the area that I could turn to. I also knew, deep down, that I was gay but would not let myself even entertain the idea of accepting this reality. Instead, I suppressed these feelings and attempted to use pornography as a replacement for the sort of real, loving, adult relationship that I actually craved. Looking back on this time in my life, I now regret this decision. Using pornography led to an addiction that consumed me and encouraged me to objectify others.

Reflecting on these past two years, I have worked as hard as I can to grapple with the “truth” and to not hide from it. Probably the biggest piece of that process of self-discovery occurred on the way home from my psychologist’s office after she diagnosed me with ADHD. I could not help but cry to myself and to thank God. Receiving this diagnosis and her counsel has been the equivalent of someone handing me an instruction manual for my brain. I know that ADHD is somewhat common, and it comes in many forms and affects everyone differently. For me, it was crippling as I always felt like I was a slave to impulse as I struggled to fight the worst parts of my character. Instead of feeling condemned to go through life wondering what was wrong with me and why I could not just be “normal” like everyone else, I

suddenly felt empowered to put a name to what I was experiencing and to seek proven strategies and treatments for effectively coping with the condition. I now know why I have had such a difficult time making friends, why I have been prone to impulsivity and overreaction, why seemingly routine tasks tend to take twice as long for me to complete as my peers, and why I have always had trouble bringing my past and future selves into the present.

I later learned that I share many of the challenges I've faced are common with other people who have been diagnosed with ADHD. My psychologist has taught me that the disorder typically hinders the development of social skills and slows down the socioemotional development of the brain as one enters adulthood. I am confident that if I had been courageous enough to seek a diagnosis and proper treatment prior to my arrest, I would not be standing in front of you all today. Unfortunately, my low self-esteem coupled with the stigma of treatment led me to tell myself that I did not need help and that, instead, I was not working hard enough to overcome the challenges that I was experiencing. Only now, with the benefit of hindsight, can I really see just how wrong this voice in my head truly was.

As time went on, I used my career as a distraction to avoid facing the problems in my personal life. I spent almost every moment of my free time doing work for school, viewing pornography, or sleeping. I became irritable, bitter, anxious, and hopelessly depressed. After blowing up at a coworker, I did seek professional counseling but was discharged before I felt ready to really tackle my primary issues such as my repressed sexuality. I attempted to reach out to another therapist during the pandemic but did not really connect with this person, which left me drowning, feeling all alone in a worsening mental health crisis. I also did not know how to appropriately ask for help without sabotaging the career that I loved so much.

The period of time in which I committed my offense was the single darkest period of my life without a doubt. Although I was impulsively and knowingly violating others' privacy the conflict between this behavior and my deeply held value of "doing right by others" was tearing me apart. I became disgusted with myself and would regularly curse the person that I saw looking back at me in the mirror. I tried, on several occasions, to delete the videos that I had made but was unable to bring myself to actually follow through with it. As a result, I continued to become more depressed and regularly considered ending my life. I am thankful that I now have access to the support that I need.

In addition to the mental health journey that I have embarked on, I have also spent the past two years working to uncover just who I really am and the God-given gifts that I still have to offer this world. Prior to my arrest, my teaching career had become the only defining factor that existed in my life. In the process of working through the loss of this career, I have been discovering new interests that I never knew that I had. I am also beginning to realize that there is much more to life than the activities that we engage in to earn a living. Working with my SOT therapist, I developed a five-point plan for building a healthy life moving forward.

I share this information today, not to make any excuses for my actions, but to offer a more complete picture of those largely unseen factors that contributed to my offense. Furthermore, I am continuing to look for ways in which I can help other people who may be in a similar situation get the help and support that they need, hopefully before their challenges lead them to cause similar harm.

While I know that I will never again be able to return to the classroom, I also know that I can still continue to teach others by living up to my core values of sincerity, integrity, and responsibility. I accept full responsibility for my past actions as well as the consequences that must accompany the crime that I have committed. Although doing so will be, undoubtedly, the most difficult thing that I have ever done, I am devoted to emerging from this process as a healthier and more fulfilled human being; taking action to make amends for the pain and suffering that I have regrettably brought into this world.

Sincerely,